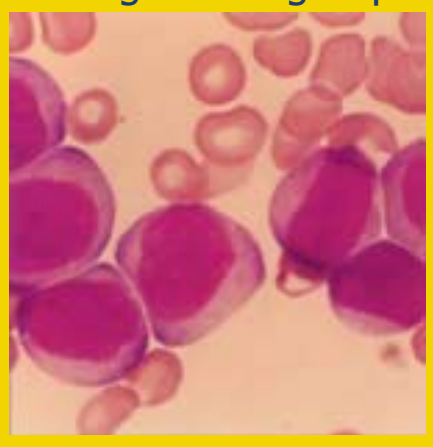
LIBRA is the "Lions International Blood Research Appeal". Its aim is to provide laboratory space and equipment at King's College Hospital in London, for research into, diagnosis and treatment of Haemophilia, Leukaemia, Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Disease.

In 1976 the haematological department at Kings College Hospital was in danger of closing until a group of Lions **guaranteed a loan from a bank of £75,000** to enable research to continue. As a result LIBRA was formed and became a Charitable Trust in 1978.



The Trust originally identified **Leukaemia, Sickle Cell Disease and Haemophilia** as areas of research. These blood diseases cover the constituent parts of blood. These days research is concentrated on **Sickle Cell Disease, Thalassaemia and Leukaemia**. Haemophilia, whilst no cure exists is being gradually eliminated.

Since establishing the Trust, **LIBRA** has provided modern accommodation for the Department, refurbished accommodation and provided much needed research equipment.

Following the initial successes of **LIBRA,** much of its efforts have been in the form of 'seed money', which has encouraged donations from other sources and grants from Government and business, the total financial worth emanating running into millions of pounds.

It is interesting to compare the success rates found in the 1970's when **LIBRA** began its support, and the situation that exists today. The research was lead by four highly qualified Professors and Doctors; today the team is lead by nine such experts.

The Situation in the 1970's:	**The situation today:**
In the 1970's most children suffering from Leukaemia died.	80% of children suffering from Leukaemia are now cured.
Sickle cell disorder was a rare and inherited tropical disease with most effected children dying in infancy.	Many of the UK's 13,000 sickle cell patients now live into old age.
Haemophiliacs often developed joint deformities	Thalassaemia patients get relief - but sadly there is no cure.
Rhesus haemolytic babies suffered badly – this was a condition where red blood cells disintegrate.	Rhesus haemolytic disease in infancy is virtually eradicated.
Pre natal diagnosis of inherited generic disease was not possible.	Ante natal diagnosis is now routine providing better diagnosis and more effective treatment.

The achievements at KCH are great and medical research has shown us what can be done but there are even bigger challenges ahead. These include the changing pattern of disease and the need to unravel the complexity from gene to protein to function. Knowledge is exploding and we need to ensure that research into blood diseases is part of this excitement.

With this we have a future with hope, a better quality of life, hope of longer remissions and even cures for more people, without research this dream cannot be realised. The last 25 years has shown us that research success and treatment success are inextricably linked.

The public purse cannot fund all the required blood research and so independent fund raising is crucial to he long term success of drug research and the continuing progress being made in terms of treatment.